



**CALFED
BAY-DELTA
PROGRAM**

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July 29, 1997

Mr. Allen Short, General Manager
Modesto Irrigation District
P.O. Box 4060
Modesto, CA 95352

Dear Mr. Short:

Thank you for your letter of July 16, 1997, regarding the Modesto Irrigation District's (MID) contribution to the development and implementation of the Tuolumne River Management Program and your concerns regarding the Ecosystem Restoration Program Plan (ERPP) targets for the Tuolumne River Ecological Zone. Many of the technical details resulting from the types of studies you described are important elements we need to consider as we refine our ERPP.

For your information, the ERPP Volume II: Ecological Zone Visions, has been sent to the printer and we expect to make it available during the week of August 11, 1997. We will check our mailing list to be certain that MID receives a copy.

In your letter, you suggest that Tuolumne River water users have no obligation to: (1) help mitigate for losses in Delta habitats due to the construction of Delta levees, (2) provide water to improve the quality of water in the San Joaquin River degraded by saline drainage water, (3) help overcome problems caused by the construction of Friant Dam, or (4) to help mitigate for the impacts of either the Federal or State water project's movement of water across the Delta from the north to the south. These concerns generally do not conflict with recommendations in the ERPP or our approach to restoring ecological health to the Tuolumne River and Delta ecological zones.

General responses to your comments include the following:

- The ERPP is recommending many actions in the Delta and Suisun Bay to improve habitat for aquatic organisms, especially chinook salmon. Many of these actions include the acquisition of land for conversion to various types of aquatic habitat. In addition, the Levee System Reliability Common Program will work closely with the ERPP to develop levee improvement prescriptions that contribute to ecological health while meeting the need to improve levee reliability.

California

The Resources Agency
Department of Fish and Game
Department of Water Resources
California Environmental Protection Agency
State Water Resources Control Board

CALFED Agencies

Federal

Environmental Protection Agency
Department of the Interior
Fish and Wildlife Service
Bureau of Reclamation
Department of Commerce
National Marine Fisheries Service

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- The ERPP has not identified the use of Tuolumne River water for dilution of saline drainage water originating from the west side of the San Joaquin Basin. Rather, Tuolumne River water has uses for spring flow events to improve chinook salmon smolt survival.
- Nothing in the ERPP is designed to mitigate for any previous State, Federal, or local actions that have adversely affected the Delta ecosystem, including the construction of Friant Dam on the San Joaquin. Rather, the ERPP is structured to restore ecological health to the Delta through a long-term restoration program guided and adjusted by the results of adaptive management, monitoring, and focused research.

As you are aware, CALFED has no regulatory authority with regard to the management of the recreational and commercial ocean salmon fisheries. We do agree with your concern regarding the potential adverse affects of high harvest levels on the number of returning adult spawners. Although the ERPP presents targets for chinook salmon in terms of population dynamics and maintaining population growth until desired levels are achieved, we anticipate review of these targets based on public and agency comments on Volume II and during upcoming prefeasibility analyses for ERPP targets and programmatic actions. Chinook salmon harvest management will be included in adaptive management through monitoring and focused research and the results of these efforts will be made available to the Pacific Fishery Management Council, the Department of Fish and Game, and the National Marine Fisheries Service (NMFS).

We are uncertain regarding the status of late-fall-run chinook salmon and steelhead in the Stanislaus, Tuolumne, and Merced Rivers, but feel it unwise to disregard them at this time. Apparently, only unsubstantiated reports of late-fall chinook exist in these rivers, and therefore, Volume II does not include any recommendations for restoration actions. The status of steelhead is not much clearer. We have unsubstantiated reports of steelhead in the Stanislaus River, observations of a few adult steelhead entering Merced River Hatchery in some years, and a 1940s report of 66 adult steelhead at the old Dennet Dam site on the Tuolumne River.

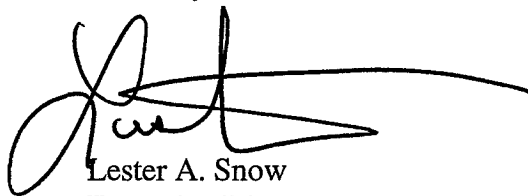
We are awaiting the determination of the NMFS regarding their status review of Central Valley steelhead stocks as their recommendation should be evaluated for inclusion in the ERPP. If their recommendations exclude concern for the San Joaquin and the Tuolumne River, then we may follow suit. Should NMFS include recommendations for steelhead in the basin, then the ERPP should have a programmatic level recommendation for steelhead. We are not set on this however, and our final recommendations will be based on the best available scientific information.

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We have included a programmatic action for steelhead in Volume II which is directed at evaluating the distribution and abundance of steelhead in the Stanislaus, Tuolumne, and Merced Rivers and, if present, evaluating the species potential for restoration.

Again, we appreciate your interest in refining the ERPP and look forward to your suggestions to improve the recommendations for the Tuolumne River Ecological Unit. We anticipate release of Volume II: Ecological Zone Visions in early August. After you and your staff have reviewed that volume, you may wish to schedule a technical meeting and invite the ERPP staff to attend. If you are interested in such a meeting, please contact Mr. Dick Daniel at the letterhead address or by telephone at (916) 657-2666.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Lester A. Snow', with a long horizontal flourish extending to the right.

Lester A. Snow
Executive Director